



## **The Congressional Connector**

Week of March 31 – April 3, 2009

### **Rep. Levin on “New Path to Viability for GM & Chrysler”**

On March 30, Rep. Levin issued the following statement after President Obama’s address on the “New Path to Viability for GM & Chrysler”: “The President expressed his commitment to the future of the domestic auto industry. He stated that he is ‘absolutely committed to working with Congress and the auto companies to meet one goal: the United States of America will lead the world in building the next generation of clean cars.’ It is now up to all of the involved parties to take the necessary and effective steps on a path that allows us to weather the global financial crisis and economic recession and reaffirms a strong domestic auto industry.”

Rep. Levin emphasized the need for the banks and bondholders to get to the table and take their losses along with other stakeholders in order to bring about the debt structure necessary in the new framework of a viable auto industry; For more information, click here:

[http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/mi12\\_levin/PR033009.shtml](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/mi12_levin/PR033009.shtml)

### **Lawmakers Express Impatience Over Backlog in Disability Claims**

On March 24, two subcommittees of the House Ways and Means Committee held a joint hearing on the large backlog of Social Security disability claims and what is being done to by Social Security Administration to get on top of the problem. Currently, thousands of Americans with disabilities must wait months, and sometimes years, to receive benefits. In the past two years, Congress has provided additional funding to help address the problem, and the Social Security Administration has begun to implement a plan to reduce the backlog, but lawmakers attending the hearing were clearly impatient with the pace of progress.

Testifying at the hearing, the Administrator of SSA, Michael Astrue, said, “Over the past 2 years, we have made significant progress in implementing initiatives to better serve the public and to reduce the hearings backlog.... Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, we are not yet where we need to be.” To read the testimony of Administrator Astrue and the other witnesses at the hearing, click here:

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=666>

Rep. Levin attended the hearing and underscored that part of the problem results from the failure of the Bush Administration and the previous Majority in Congress to provide adequate funding to SSA to address the backlog. Addressing Administrator Astrue, Rep. Levin said, “We need to give you the resources you need to end this disgrace.”

### **Great Lakes Restoration Gains Supporters in Congress**

On March 25, a bipartisan group of 24 House lawmakers, including Rep. Levin, wrote to the Chairman of the House Budget Committee to urge the panel to include Great Lakes restoration funding in the 2010 budget resolution. In his own budget submission to Congress, President Obama proposed the creation of a \$475 million Great Lakes restoration fund to target the most significant environmental problems in the Great Lakes Basin.

The letter to the Budget Committee read, in part: “The Great Lakes are an important national treasure.... According to some scientific views, the Great Lakes are at a tipping point. Failure to protect and restore the lakes now will result in more serious consequences.” To view the Great Lakes letter, click here:

[http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/mi12\\_levin/morenews/LT032509.shtml](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/mi12_levin/morenews/LT032509.shtml)

## **Treasury Launches Foreclosure Prevention Website**

The Treasury Department recently launched a new website to help homeowners at risk of foreclosure access new assistance programs to refinance or modify their mortgages. Several weeks ago, the Administration announced an initiative to help up to 3-4 million at-risk homeowners avoid foreclosure by reducing monthly mortgage payments. A second initiative will provide refinancing assistance to 4-5 million more homeowners who are current on mortgages but who owe more than their home is worth due to falling home values. “The federal government has taken a number of steps to address the foreclosure crisis that is devastating our neighborhoods and hindering economic recovery, and we’ll take as many steps as are needed to fix the problem,” said Rep. Levin.

If you or someone you know is facing foreclosure, or worried about your ability to make your mortgage payments, you can visit <http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov> for more information on these programs.